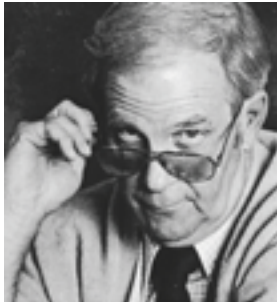
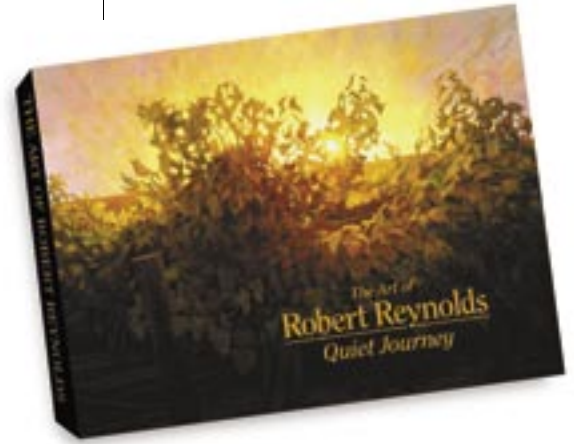


QUIET JOURNEY

BY PETER KING



Jim Hayes

THE CAL POLY EXPERIENCE does not conclude with a commencement address and a cap and gown. Rather, to come to Cal Poly is to join a family – an enlistment that transcends time and geography.

In late December 2006, **Mark Looker**, (JOUR '76), a public relations consultant who operates out of the Central Valley, received a call from an old Cal Poly connection who wanted advice on how to promote a book of paintings by a renowned Central Coast artist and Cal Poly emeritus art professor.

“Quiet Journey: The Art of Robert Reynolds” was being sold through El Corral Bookstore, with the bulk of proceeds from the book going to the Cal Poly Alumni Association.

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There was a sense that the book could use a push, and Looker was willing to help.

An agriculture issues specialist, Looker admittedly knows more about water politics than watercolors. He was hooked, though, when he heard that a certain former journalism professor had written text for the book.

If there is such a thing as a living university, **Jim Hayes** has represented its beating core for generations of Cal Poly journalism students. All professors keep office hours. Hayes, who retired years ago, maintains office lifetimes, keeping in close touch with, and providing sage counsel to, hundreds if not thousands of journalism students.

Looker reached out to **Ellen Pensky** (JOUR '75) who now runs her own marketing firm in San Francisco. “Although I always looked fondly on my college days,” recalls Pensky, “I never connected back to Cal Poly and actually hadn’t been on

campus since I graduated.”

Initially, she agreed to spend an hour on the project, but soon “it occurred to me that this was a marketing problem – no different than any of the tasks that I tackle on a daily basis. This was my opportunity to give back to the college that had given me so much.”

More than a dozen other Journalism Department alums became members of the campaign team. All had found professional success after leaving Cal Poly. Frances Squire, marketing director for West Hills Community College District in Coalinga, spoke for many of the volunteers: “I would move mountains, if I could, to help Jim and Cal Poly. Aside from my immediate family, there is no one else who has had as much influence on the course of my career, and thus my life.”

They developed a strategy, “Loud Marketing Plan for Quiet Journey” Pensky calls it, that involved reaching out to potential audiences for the book – art lovers, California nature buffs and Cal Poly grads. A spirited use of the Internet to spread the word about “Quiet Journey” would be another major thrust.

It’s too soon to determine the campaign’s success, but early returns are favorable. And beyond any number of books sold, there have been other rewards – reconnecting with long-lost fellow alums, meeting like-minded graduates from other years, working with current public relations students, and giving back – to both a university and a beloved professor.

“Sometimes,” Jim Hayes writes in a “Quiet Journey” caption that runs, interestingly enough, alongside a Reynolds’ painting of a rather wise-looking owl, “you have to go where the spirit takes you.”

He always was one to have the last, best word. □